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ABSTRACT

Issues related to contemporary assessment and remediation in postsecondary education are considered, along with the impact of these issues on community college and university articulation and transfer. Program innovations implemented at Cochise College (Arizona) to serve basic skills education students are described. Community colleges face a new issue of how to educate the diverse students they receive, especially the underprepared. What is needed is a method of separating those students who have an existing capacity to do academic work from those whose aptitude needs to be developed through remediation. One approach is to incorporate basic skills courses in traditional department offerings. At Cochise College each program is individually designed to meet the specific remediation needs of a student. In Arizona 43% of the community colleges allow some remedial coursework to meet graduation requirements. At Cochise College, 6 of the 60 semester hours required for graduation are allowed to be from remedial classes. (SW)

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ASSESSMENT AND REMEDIATION ISSUES IN ARTICULATION

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Abstract

This presentation focuses on the issues related to contemporary assessment and remediation in post secondary education. The impact of these issues on community college and university articulation and transfer is discussed. The program innovations implemented at Cochise College to serve basic skills education students are introduced.

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ASSESSMENT AND REMEDIATION ISSUES IN ARTICULATION

Today's society recognizes the importance of education and legislation attempts to guarantee equal access to all who desire to further their knowledge. At the same time educators have an acute awareness of the poor academic preparation many High School graduates receive. It is evident that for whatever reason the college bound student is becoming more and more academically handicapped. Finding the secondary schools culpable is not only to simple but probably too simplistic. Socioeconomic factors obviously play a part in the educational process, but these factors are addressed only theoretically in post secondary education. If higher education professionals believe secondary education is responsible for creating the high risk student, and thus the need for basic skills programs, then they have an ability to alter that situation. Too often cause is confused with effect by those who claim elementary and secondary school systems are to blame for the need for basic skills programs. Regardless of where the blame is placed the problem is evident. "A Youth Literary Task Force in New York City reported in April of 1982 that 8% of that city's youths between the ages of 14 and 21 are illiterate" (Rouche & Kirk, 1974).

The Governor of the State of Arizona, Bruce Babbitt, has recognized the problem and instituted proposals with the State Universities and Board of Regents that revise entrance requirements. For admission to any of Arizona's three state

universities Arizona high school students will soon be required to take 3 years of high school math, 2 years of science, and 4 years of english. The establishment of this admission policy has led to the adoption of an Open Door Policy for Admission to Arizona Community Colleges (Data Item 1).

Arizona was not the first state nor is it alone in its adoption of an Open Door Policy. Many other states are included in this movement whose philosophy is best summarized that, "Some colleges will set certain selective standards for admission and retention of students, but community colleges will keep their doors open to any person, youth, or adult, who can profit by what the colleges can offer, and the colleges will strive to offer what the people can profit by" (Grant & Hoeber, 1978). Given the changes in institutional and governmental policies described earlier, one should not be surprised to find that the student body at most post secondary institutions has changed radically over the past twenty years. Educators have invented labels to categorize the students now coming to college who previously would not have enrolled or been accepted: high risk, disadvantaged, non traditional, developmental, remedial, new, and many others (Kintzer, 1982). Community colleges are no longer faced with the decisions universities have to make, that of determining who should be educated. A new issue has evolved, that of how to educate the diverse students they receive, especially the under prepared.

The problem now facing educators is that of assessing the academic ability of the student. But "ability" has two distinct meanings which imply different admissions policies. In one usage academic ability means an existing capacity to do academic work. In the other usage academic ability means a potential capacity to do such work. For example, to say that an applicant "has the ability" to do differential calculus may mean either that the applicant can already do differential calculus or that the applicant could learn to do it given the opportunity and motivation. To avoid this ambiguity we will call potential ability "aptitude" and existing ability "achievement" (Jencks & Crouse, 1982).

Nationally 60% of all persons who enter community college need some developmental work, and that percentage is rising. In almost any community college developmental studies class, one may find an age range of 16 to 20, with a median age of close to 30. Slightly more than half the class are female with the trend toward more females. Cultures are as diverse as the world; academic abilities are as varied as one can imagine. Goals and objectives of this developmental population do not follow an easy pattern (Griffin, 1983). The developmental educator is challenged to develop methods and techniques that supercede traditional learning in traditional settings.

What is needed is a method of separating the "achievers" from those whose "aptitude" needs to be developed through remediation.

Post secondary institutions use numerous methods to identify the potential basic skills students: grade point average, class standing, ACT/SAT scores, Nelson-Denny grade equivalent, locally generated examinations, and others. Most institutions use some combination of these methods (Grant & Hoeber, 1978). In Arizona the locally generated examinations rank highest as a method to identify those students in need of remediation and the Nelson-Denny is next.

Identification of those students in need of remedial assistance does not resolve the problem. Educators are then faced with how to best meet the educational needs of those students. Because academic skills improvement is directly related to students' success in college level classes, arguments have been made for incorporating the basic skills courses in traditional department offerings. Under this arrangement courses are often considered marginal when compared to regular college courses, and courses in basic skills are frequently staffed by adjunct instructors who are sometimes only loosely connected to departmental activities or by faculty who resent teaching basic skills at the college level. Organizing skills instruction in its own department or learning center provide legitimacy and prestige for both faculty and students. The involvement of teachers who are effective and committed to basic academic skills instruction creates an environment in which students with diverse preparation can be successful (Rouche & Kirk, 1974).

Of course, not all academic departments fall prey to negativity and not all learning centers and basic skills departments are free of it. No matter how a program is organized, a critical component for success is the perception that basic skills instruction has positive value and an appropriate place (Gruenberg, 1983). It also allows the institution to draw state aid for those enrollments. Therefore, on a practical level the credit/no credit issue has been solved by financial factors.

Effective teaching is an important element to successful skills improvement. Recognition of individual differences has led to greater need for innovation (Grant & Hoeber, 1978). Both the instructors and the programs need to be innovative. More grammar, composition, reading, and math taught in the same manner as in previous school years will not succeed. The search for non traditional methods creates a burden on developmental programs. Successful elements of a number of programs must be examined and adapted to local needs (Data Item 2). Not only must the programs be tailored from campus to campus, but they must be modified from student to student. Cochise College, in Douglas, Arizona, addresses the issue of individuality with a Directed Study Program. Each program is individually designed to meet the specific remediation needs of a student. It is time consuming and could not be done without the support of dedicated faculty members (Data Item 3).

Remedial offerings present another problem to students and institutions -- acceptance of transfer credit. Community colleges offer remedial courses for academic credit. This makes the courses appear more valid to the student who is reluctant for remediation and allows the institution to draw state aid for the enrollments. Still, the question remains -- what can be done with credit awarded for pre collegiate level work? In Arizona 43% of the community colleges allow some remedial coursework to meet graduation requirements. At Cochise College six of the 60 semester hours required for graduation are allowed to be from remedial classes. At that institution it is possible for a student to take 17 semester hours in Basic Skills classes not counting those accumulated for the Remedial Independent Studies. Of the 17 hours only 3 are accepted in transfer to a state university. The class is Math 020, Elementary Algebra and the schools that accept it use it only as a free general elective in the Bachelor's degree program.

So why bother with remedial classes if the credit has no value? An American educational goal is to encourage students to complete as many years of schooling as possible. Adults have the luxury of leaving school; students can "...change their minds, drop out, transfer, take jobs, and later return" (Kraetsch, 1980). The "open door" has more often typified a "revolving door" rather than an entrance to new opportunities (Ibid). If universities and colleges are to meet the challenges of non traditional students, certain accommodations must be made.

The academically deficient student differs from the traditional college student in both skill levels and personality styles. In the academic areas, the ill equipped student lacks a solid educational base--poor study habits, inadequate basic skills, needed attention span. On the psychological side, the same student has learning blocks and lacks motivation. The remedial student has a low self image coupled with inadequate academic background and psychological barriers which further complicate the prospect of overcoming academic deficiencies. This is especially true if the student is from a low socioeconomic group lacking academic models. State legislators and community college planners must realize that any remedial programs in higher education should be equipped to deal with both academic deficiencies and psychological factors of individuals if real progress and successful intervention are to be realized.

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DATA ITEM 1

ARIZONA'S COMMUNITY COLLEGE OPEN DOOR POLICY

R7-1-20. Student Admissions

A. Student Admissions - Admission to the community colleges in Arizona may be granted to any person who meets one of the following criteria:

1. Is a graduate of an accredited high school.

2. Has a G.E.D. certificate of high school equivalency.

3. Is 18 years of age or older and demonstrates evidence of potential success in the community college.

4. Is a transfer student in good standing from another college or university.

B. Special Student Admissions - Admissions to the community colleges in Arizona may be granted to any student who:

1. Is attending an accredited high school (Grades 9 through 12) and is recommended as a special student. For purposes of this rule, "accredited " high school means accredited by the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools or an institution that meets comparable accrediting standards approved by the State Community College Board. Admission shall be considered on an individual basis and in concurrence with the student, parent, and appropriate high school and college officials.

2. Is an exceptional junior high school (Grades 7 and 8) student. Admission should only be considered after a careful evaluation and screening process has been followed. The determination shall be made on an individual basis and in concurrence with the student, parent, and appropriate junior high and college officials.

Adopted August 21, 1982
The Arizona State Board of Directors of Community Colleges

DATA ITEM 2

CONTRIBUTORS TO A SUCCESSFUL REMEDIAL PROGRAM

1. Programs are physically located so as to appear separate from, yet are central to, campuses.

2. Most programs recognize the importance of the first semester in budget disbursements.

3. Students motivation and persistence are regarded as more important than traditional predictors of success.

4. Pre-college structured, comprehensive orientation programs are essential.

5. Rules are established, articulated and often contracted by students.

6. Programs provide a positive environment for the development of a better self image.

7. Support services are responsive and flexible.

8. First semester grade point averages are not considered critically important to overall success.

COMMON COMPONENTS OF REMEDIAL SKILLS PROGRAMS

1. Math

2. Reading

3. Grammar

4. Science

5. Ethnic Studies

6. Self Development

7. Career/Life Planning

8. Study/Survival Skills

DATA ITEM 3

COCHISE COLLEGE DIRECTED STUDY PROGRAM

One mission of the community college is to provide learning opportunities for students unable to participate in and benefit from traditional classroom instruction. For example, the physically handicapped student and the student with specific learning disabilities related to neurological dysfunctioning fall into this category. Although most of these students score within the normal range of intelligence on standardized IQ tests, their abilities to succeed independently in one or more subjects such as reading or mathematics are limited.

The Communications and Counseling Departments propose an individualized study contract to provide instruction for those individuals who need one-on-one instruction. This Directed Study Contract (099) would enable a student to work with a counselor and instructor whereby the student's learning difficulties would be diagnosed and individual objectives and goals would be established. The 099 contract provides a format for individualizing instruction designed to meet a particular student's needs. Diagnostic tests, tutoring schedules, course objectives, training and instructional methods, and criteria for evaluation will be outlined in the contract. Course credit will be determined by the instructor and the appropriate division chairperson.

The outcome of each student's course of study will vary according to the goals set forth in his or her contract. It is not necessarily the intent of the college to mainstream 099 students into existing college courses. However, placement in external training programs, additional academic instruction, and on-the-job training may be explored.

Prospective 099 student referrals will come from local educational institutions and agencies or Cochise College faculty. The student shall submit a completed 099 contract and an add slip to the Office of the Registrar before the end of the fourth week of classes.

Registrar's Office
Cochise College
Douglas, Arizona